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OF

LORD MACAULAY

BY THE VERY REVEREND

THE DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S

REPRINTED FROM THE PAPERS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY

LONDON

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS

1862

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LORD MACAULAY.*

The biography of Lord Macaulay belongs rather to the history of Literature than to that of Natural Philosophy: he takes his proper place among the statesmen, orators, poets, essayists, historians of England, not among her men of science. With a mind so active and wide-ranging, he could not but take deep interest in the progress and in the marvellous discoveries of modern science; but he was content to accept those results on the authority of others, and to dwell on their political and social consequences, rather than himself to follow out their slow and laborious processes, for which, indefatigable as he was, he had no time, probably no inclination. Yet the annals of the Royal Society, which has ever been proud to enrol among its members statesmen and men of letters of the highest eminence, cannot pass over in silence a name so illustrious as that of Lord Macaulay.

* This memoir was written at the request of the President (Sir B. Brodie) and some members of the Council, for the Annual Journal of the Royal Society. Should a more full and copious biography of Lord Macaulay, at any future time, be thought advisable, this brief sketch will at once cede its place. In the meantime, it may be acceptable to the readers of Lord Macaulay's works, who will be naturally desirous to know something of his public and his private life.

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born October 25, 1800, at Rothley Temple in Leicestershire, the seat of his paternal uncle, Thomas Babington. His father, Zachary Macaulay, resided at Clapham, one of those earnest and zealous men who, with Mr. Wilberforce, led the way in the strong religious reaction which followed the French Revolution, and whom posterity will honour as among the earliest and most steady adversaries of the African Slave Trade, the advocates of the Emancipation of the Negroes in our Colonies. The perpetual agitation of such questions, involving the most sacred principles of human liberty, could not be without its effect on the precocious mind of the young Macaulay. Perhaps to his birth and training in that school he owed in some degree his command of biblical illustration, which, however, his strong sense and sober judgement always kept within the limits of serious and respectful reverence. Family traditions, happily only traditions, of his early promise, of his childish attempts at composition in prose and verse, were not likely to be lost among a strong religious party, bound together by common sympathies, and maintaining an active correspondence throughout the country. The fame of young Macaulay reached the ears of Hannah More, and, after receiving a visit from him, the High Priestess of the brotherhood, in an agreeable letter, still extant, uttered an oracle predictive of his future greatness. After a few years of instruction at a small school in Clapham, at the age of twelve he was placed under the care of the Rev. Mr. Preston, first at Shelford, afterwards near Buntingford, in the neighbourhood of Cambridge. Mr. Preston seems to have been a man of attainments and

judgement. He must have taught the Latin and Greek authors extremely well, for under his instruction Macaulay became a sound and good scholar. He did more, he fostered that love for the great classical writers, without which all study is barren and without durable impression. He respected too that great maxim, that no one is so well taught as by himself. Having given or strengthened the impulse, he left the young scholar to his own insatiable avidity for learning, and for books of all kinds. The schoolboy sent an anonymous defence of novel reading to the serious journal of his father's friends, the "Christian Observer," which was inserted. This passion for novel reading adhered to him to the last; he swept the whole range, not only of English but of foreign fiction, not without great profit to the future historian. The higher tastes which he then imbibed were equally indelible; his admiration of the unrivalled writers of Greece and Rome grew deeper to the close of his life. Homer and Thucydides, and Tacitus, remained among his constant and familiar studies, and no doubt, without controlling him to servile imitation, exercised a powerful influence on his mode of composition and on his style. Among his father's friends holding the same religious opinions, was Isaac Milner, Dean of Carlisle, and Master of Queen's College, a man with a singular union of profound mathematical acquirements, strong evangelical views, and a peculiar broad humour. During his visits to Milner at Cambridge, Macaulay acquired that strong attachment to the University, which, like his other attachments, seemed to become more strong and fervent with the progress of years.

In his nineteenth year he began his residence at Trinity College, Cambridge. His career at Cambridge was not quite so brilliant as the sanguine expectations of his friends had foretold. He had a repugnance for mathematics, or rather he was under the jealous and absorbing spell of more congenial studies. That repugnance in after life was a subject of much regret; he fully recognised the importance, almost the necessity, of such studies for perfect education. Even his scholarship, probably far more extensive, wanted that exquisite polish and nicety acquired only at our great public schools, from which came his chief rivals. He carried away, however, the Craven Scholarship, two prizes for English verse, and finally, the object of his highest ambition, a Fellowship of Trinity College. On this success he dwelt to the close of his life with pride. It gratified two of his strongest feelings,—attachment to Cambridge, and the desire of some independent provision which should enable him to enter on his professional career. On the inestimable advantages of such fellowships to young men of high promise and ability but of scanty means, he always insisted with great earnestness, and deprecated any change in the academical system which should diminish the number of such foundations, held, as he would recount with his unfailing memory, by so many of our first public men.

The Law was the profession he chose; he was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn, February 1826; he took chambers, he read, he joined the Northern Circuit. But literature was too strong for law. His legal studies were no doubt of infinite value; they were in truth indispensable for his historical writings, and were here-

after to bear fruit in a sphere which his wildest imagination could not anticipate. He had received, indeed, from the discerning judgment of Lord Lyndhurst, a Commissionership of Bankrupts, 1827. No doubt his Cambridge fame and general promise recommended him for that office. But it was to letters that he was to owe his first opening to public life. In letters he had begun with modest contributions to a magazine, "Knight's Quarterly," of no great circulation, but which was mainly supported by some of his Cambridge friends: in this appeared some of his finest ballads. On a sudden he broke out with an article on Milton in the "Edinburgh Review," which perhaps excited greater attention than any article which had ever appeared, not immediately connected with the politics of the day. Taking the field in the same pages with the brilliant copiousness of Jeffrey, the vigorous and caustic versatility of Brougham, the inimitable wit and drollery and sound sense of Sydney Smith, to say nothing of the writers in the rival "Quarterly Journal," the young reviewer had struck out his own path. In comprehensiveness of knowledge, in the originality and boldness of his views, in mastery over the whole history and the life of the eventful times of Milton, in variety and felicity of illustration, in vigour, fulness, and vivacity of style, he seemed to make an epoch and a revolution in review-writing. Up to this time, with some excellent exceptions, the articles in reviews had confined themselves to notices, more or less excursive, of new books, and to discussions of the political or polemic questions of the day. The article now aspired to be a full dissertation on the history of any great period, on the life of any

great man of any time, on the writings, on the influence, on the merits of authors of the highest fame. From a review it became an historical, biographical, philosophical essay.

This paper was followed by others of equal, some perhaps of superior excellence, each opening a new view into the vast range of the author's reading, showing his boldness and independence of judgement, the wonderful stores of his memory, his prodigality, sometimes perhaps uncontrolled, of allusion, illustration, similitude. A young Whig, of high and blameless character, popular with his friends, with the reputation of oratorical power in the debating rooms at Cambridge (he delivered one speech in London, we believe, at an Anti-Slavery Meeting, which made some noise), and the acknowledged author of such articles in one of the two popular journals of the day, could not but command the attention, and awaken the hopes of his party. If ever there was a nobleman a patron of letters from a deep and genuine and discriminating love of letters, it was Lord Lansdowne. Lord Lansdowne offered a seat in Parliament to the author of the admirable articles in the "Edinburgh Review." On the acceptance of this offer there could be no hesitation; his political opinions were in the strictest unison with Lord Lansdowne's. Few public men have been so calmly, deliberately true to their first political opinions as Macaulay. Unquestionably, change of political opinions, on full unselfish conviction, according to change of circumstances, may be the noblest act of moral courage, especially in the face of obloquy and misrepresentation. The best men may become wiser as they grow older. But to this trial Macaulay was never

subjected, he was never called upon to this effort of self-sacrifice. He was a liberal in the highest and widest sense; some may think that he carried these views too far, some not far enough. But during life he was unswerving, without vacillation. The line which he drew between constitutional liberty and democracy in his early speeches on Reform and on the Charter, was precisely the same with that which he drew late in life, in a remarkable letter on the prospects and probable destiny of the United States of America.

Four years after he had been called to the bar, in 1830, Macaulay was returned to Parliament for Calne. His public life had now commenced. That public life it may be convenient briefly to survey in its several phases, as statesman, orator, poet, essayist, historian. Such was his remarkable variety and versatility. Very few men, indeed, have achieved great things in such different kinds of excellence.

In Parliament he had too much wisdom, too much self-respect, too much respect for his auditory (an auditory just in the main but severe, sometimes capricious in its justice, and jealous above all even of merit, if obtrusive, importunate, or too self-confident), to thrust himself forward at once into the foremost ranks. Till the Reform Bill he was content to try his arms on rare occasions; he would not waste his power on desultory skirmishes and on trivial subjects. Upon that momentous question, the Reform of 1832, he first put forth his strength. But of his speeches hereafter. The reputation acquired during these debates secured him a seat in Parliament, independent even on generous and unexacting friendship; he was returned, December,

1832, for the wealthy and populous borough of Leeds, enfranchised by the Reform Bill. In the year 1834, a great, and no doubt unexpected change took place in his prospects, it might seem in his destination. In 1832 he had accepted the office of Secretary to the Board of Control. In his official capacity (in 1834) he made a speech on the renewal of the Indian Charter, a speech which may be read in no unfavourable comparison with Burke's most splendid orations. In breadth and comprehensiveness of view it may compete, in fulness and accuracy surpass, in richness of diction rival the renowned orator; of course, as the occasion was so different, it had nothing of the passion, the terrible picturesqueness, the vituperation; but it had calm statesmanship, and philosophical, or rather, perhaps, historical thought. This speech of itself might seem to designate him to the Government as a member of the New Council which was to legislate for India. The offer was made. The vast field of India was of itself likely to seize on his imagination; he might aspire to be the legislator, as Heber the religious missionary, of that wonderful realm. He had many friends, the family of Grant especially (the present Lord Glenelg was the President of the Board of Control), closely connected with India; how much he had read or thought on the subject, his papers on Clive and Hastings (written later) may, nevertheless, bear testimony. Still, no doubt, prudential motives, and those of no ungenerous prudence, influenced his determination. By a few years of economy, careful but not illiberal, he might make a provision for his future life (he was a man with no expensive or prodigal habits) which might place him

above dependence either on the servitude of office, or the servitude of literary labour. There was another incentive — his family had never been affluent. He might add to the comforts and assist in the advancement of those to whom he was attached by the strongest domestic affections, a duty which he discharged with unsparing generosity. In India he took his seat as Member of the Council and as President of the Law Commission. It has been supposed, and indeed asserted, that this legislative mission was barren and without result; now, however, it is bearing its mature fruits. After much, perhaps inevitable, delay and repeated revisions, the Indian Criminal Code, in the formation of which he took a leading part, and which he had enriched with most valuable explanatory notes, will, with some alterations, and those not substantial, from January 1862 have the force of law throughout British India. Macaulay's share in this great work, especially his notes, is declared by those who have a right to judge on such subjects, to have placed his reputation as a jurist on a solid foundation. It is the first, and therefore the most important, of a series of operations upon the judicial system of India, which will have a great effect upon the state of society in that country; and will not be without influence upon the jurisprudence of England.

Soon after his return to England in 1838, in January 1840, he was elected by acclamation, representative of the city of Edinburgh; that seat he filled undisturbed till July 1847. He had already been named on the Privy Council, and had accepted the office of Secretary at War. He was Secretary at War, with a seat

in the cabinet, about two years, from 1839 to 1841. On the return of his friends to power, he became, July 12, 1846, Paymaster of the Forces.

But throughout this period of his life the great inward struggle was going on within his mind between the ambition of public usefulness, of parliamentary and official distinction, and the love of letters, which will rarely brook a rival on the throne, the still higher ambition, as he thought, of adding some great work to the treasures of English thought and English literature. In the office at Whitehall or the Horse Guards, on the benches of the House of Commons, amid the applauses or admiring silence of the House, his heart was in his library, and among his books. He yearned for a place not so much among the great parliamentary leaders and the famous statesmen of the land, the Chathams, Burkes, Foxs, as among the immortal writers in verse and prose, the Miltons, Clarendons, Addisons, Gibbons. The auditory which he coveted was that vast expanding world throughout which the English language is spoken; the fame, that which will only die with the death of English letters. Throughout the whole time of his absence from England, on his voyage to India and on his return, in India, as far as leisure would allow, and during his parliamentary and official career, he was still with his indefatigable industry heaping up stores of knowledge, stores which could not overload his capacious and retentive memory, — memory, whose grasp and self-command seemed to expand with its accumulating treasures, — memory which disdained nothing as beneath it, and was never perplexed or burdened by its incalculable possessions. As a cu-

rious instance of his range and activity of reading, among the books which he took with him to India, were the many huge volumes of St. Chrysostom's works. Their still almost pure and harmonious Greek, and their importance in the history of religious opinion (always a subject of deep interest), carried him through a task which has been achieved by few professional theologians. As an illustration of his powers of memory, he has said, and he was a most unboastful man, that if Milton's great poem were lost, he thought that he could accurately commit to writing at least all the first books of Paradise Lost.

This life-long inward strife, which perhaps might have remained unreconciled till towards the close of his days, came to a sudden and unexpected issue. At the election in 1847, Macaulay was the rejected candidate for the city of Edinburgh. Nor can it be denied, though those who admire Macaulay will not admire him the less, that he was accessory to his own failure. The event turned on a religious question, in which Edinburgh, true to its old Scotch prejudices, adhered to the less liberal view. Macaulay could not be persuaded to humour, to temporise, even to conciliate. He took the loftiest tone, boldly, indignantly rebuked the voters for their narrow, in his estimation, discreditable bigotry. He felt, there can be no doubt, this blow at the time bitterly. He was perhaps not suited for, he had never before been tried in the rough and coarse work of the popular canvass and the hustings; he was distressed at the desertion or the lukewarmness of friends; he was ashamed, as he openly declared, of the disgrace which Edinburgh inflicted on herself. In a striking poem,

recently published, in which are some of the finest stanzas in the language, he gave full vent to his feelings of indignation and sorrow. But at the same time, and in the same poem, he finds and expresses his lofty sense of consolation. The great debate was ended; he was released; he was emancipated from public, from parliamentary life. He might retire with dignity and honour to the undisturbed, undistracted cultivation of letters; henceforth his study was his scene of action; literary fame was to be the undivided mistress of his affections, his earthly exceeding great reward. Edinburgh made a few years after noble amends by returning Macaulay (at the election in 1852) without solicitation, without expense, even without the usual flattery of a personal canvass; he had but to appear, to accept, and return thanks for his ovation. He sat for Edinburgh from July 1852 to 1856. But he sat without the trammels, without the least desire of office: he spoke rarely, but never without effect. In 1856, failing health compelled him to resign that honourable post. Some other honours, but honours which belonged to a man of letters, awaited him and courted his acceptance. He was Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow in 1848; Trustee of the British Museum, February 1847 (an office which he highly esteemed, and to which he attended with much assiduity, and with great public advantage); Fellow of the Royal Society, November 1849; Foreign Member of the French Academy, May 1857, and of the Prussian Order of Merit (1857); High Steward of Cambridge (1857). In the same year he was raised to the peerage, a tribute to his high and blameless character and transcendent literary dis-

tinction, and an act of royal favour, quite unexpected, but highly approved by all whose approbation was of real value.

So far our imperfect sketch has exhibited Lord Macaulay as a public man, as a jurist, and as a statesman; some words must follow as to his rank as an orator. It is remarkable how rarely in this country the famous and commanding public speaker, either in parliament or even at the bar, and the great writer, have met in the same person. Bolingbroke, Burke, and Macaulay (the unrivalled comedies of Sheridan, the State Papers and exquisite political satires of Canning are hardly in point) stand perhaps alone. If all the writings of Chatham, Pit, Fox, Erskine, Peel, had been suppressed, the world would have suffered no great loss. Macaulay had no thought of resting his fame on his parliamentary speeches; he would willingly have left them to the rarely visited cemetery of the parliamentary history. He was placed under compulsion by the act of a piratical bookseller, who printed many of them (insinuating that he did so by authority) bristling with blunders, bad English, loose argument, errors and mistakes about events and persons, everything most abhorrent to Macaulay's taste and judgement. He was under the necessity of publishing a more trustworthy edition. We confess some gratitude for this bad act of the unprincipled Curll of our days, for some of these speeches appear to us oratorical compositions of the highest order. By all accounts Macaulay's delivery was far too rapid to be impressive; it wanted also variety and flexibility of intonation. Even the most practised reporters panted after him in

vain; how much more the slower intellects of country gentlemen and the mass of the House! This, however, only heightens our astonishment that speeches so full, so profoundly meditated, yet with so much freedom, with no appearance of being got by heart, with such prodigality of illustration and allusion, should be poured forth with such unhesitating flow, with such bewildering quickness of utterance. To read them with delight and profit, we read them rather slowly; we can hardly conceive that they were spoken less deliberately. It may be questioned, and has been questioned, whether Macaulay was, or could have become, a masterly debater. This accomplishment, except in rare examples, is acquired only by long use and practice. When Macaulay entered the House, the first places were filled by men of established influence and much parliamentary training. Even if he had felt called upon to make himself more prominent, it may be doubted whether he could have sufficiently curbed his impetuous energy, or checked his torrent of words. He would have found it difficult to assume the stately, prudent, reserved, compressed reply; he might have torn his adversaries' arguments to shreds, but he would not have been content without a host of other arguments, and so would have destroyed the effect of his own confutation. Still it is remarkable that on two occasions a speech of Macaulay's actually turned the vote of the House, and carried the question (a very rare event) in his own way, — the debate on the Copyright Act, and the question of Judges holding seats in the House of Commons. Though he took his seat, Lord Macaulay never spoke in the House of Peers; he went

down, we believe, more than once, with the intention of speaking, but some unexpected turn in the debate deprived him of his opportunity; his friends, who knew the feeble state of his health at that time, were almost rejoiced at their disappointment in not hearing him in that which would have been so congenial a field for his studied and matured eloquence.

As a poet the fame of Macaulay rests, with the exception of the stanzas above alluded to, and one or two small pieces, on his Ballads, his "Lays of Rome," his "Armada," his "Cavalier" and "Cromwellian," and his "Ivry," and "Moncontour." In other departments of poetry he might have been endangered by his affluence and prodigality; his prize poems, and some of his early writings betray the danger. But the essence of the ballad, of popular poetry (for which in all its forms, from the Prince of ballad writers, Homer, to the common street ballad, which he caught up instantaneously, and could repeat by the score, he had an absolute passion), is simplicity—simplicity not inconsistent with the utmost picturesqueness, with the richest word-painting. Its whole excellence is in rapidity of movement, short, sudden transition, sharp, emphatic touches of tenderness, or of the pathetic, in above all, life, unreposing, unflagging, vigorous, stirring life; with words enough, but not an idle word, words which strike home to the heart, and rivet themselves on the memory; a cadence which enthralls and will not die away from the ear. The popularity of Macaulay's ballads is the best proof of their excellence; they have become the burden of a host of imitators. Popularity may be a bad test of some of the higher kinds of poetry. Dante,

Milton, Shakespeare, to be fully appreciated, may require a thoughtful, refined, enlightened constituency; ballad poetry may be safely left to universal suffrage.

Even in his famous Essays Macaulay had not satisfied his own ambition, nor reached that place after which he aspired in English letters. He seemed disposed to leave them buried in the voluminous journal in which they had appeared. Here, however, it was the honest admiration of the public, not the base desire of a bookseller for gain, which suggested and indeed compelled their separate publication. America set the example: the first collection was made to gratify the laudable curiosity of those who are spreading our language and our literature over a continent to which our island is but a speck in the ocean. However flattering this homage, American editions are not to be implicitly depended upon, and are confined to their own use. It became necessary to answer the demand in England, and edition after edition has followed in rapid unexhausted succession. On these essays (not perhaps fitly so called, at least very unlike the short essays on religious, moral, social subjects, such as Bacon's, Cowley's, Addison's, Johnson's, Goldsmith's) we cannot of course speak at length. They are rather philosophical, or historical disquisitions, and are remarkable in the first place for their vast range and variety. Some grapple with the most profound questions,—the Baconian philosophy, the law of population against Mr. Sadler, and what is called the Utilitarian philosophy. This essay Macaulay himself, with noble moderation and self-respect, refused to include in his own selection, not because he was disposed to retract one argument, or to recede from the severity of

his judgement on the opinions which he undertook to refute, but because he had not done justice to the high character of his adversary, the late Mr. Mill. Some belong to literary criticism, in which he delighted to mingle singularly acute and original observations on the biographies of distinguished authors, their place in society; and the articles on Dryden, the Comic Dramatists of Charles II., Temple, Addison, Johnson, Byron, are the most full, instructive, and amusing views of the literary life of their respective ages, as well as of their specific works. The greater number, however, and doubtless the most valuable of the essays, are those which belong to history; a few to the history of Europe,—Machiavelli, Ranke's Lives of the Popes, Frederick the Great, Mirabeau, Barrère. In these two last, his judgements on the acts and on the men of the French Revolution are very striking. But the chief and the most important are those on English History. This was manifestly the subject which he had thought on most profoundly, investigated with the greatest industry, and studied down to what we may call the very dregs and lees of our political and social and religious life. There is hardly an important period, at least in our later history, which has not passed under his review. With the justly honoured exception of Hallam's "Constitutional History," Macaulay usually dismisses his author with a few words of respect or contempt, and draws almost altogether on his own resources. So Burleigh gives us the reign of Elizabeth; Bacon that of James I.; Milton and Hampden, of Charles I. and the Republic; Temple (with Mackintosh's History), Charles II. and the Revolution; Horace

Walpole, Chatham, Pitt, the Georges; Clive and Hastings, the rise of our Indian Empire. The variety of topics is almost as nothing to the variety of information on every topic; he seemed to have read everything, and to recollect all that he had read.

As to the style of these essays, of Macaulay's style in general, a few observations. It was eminently his own, but his own not by strange words, or strange collocation of words, by phrases of perpetual occurrence, or the straining after original and striking terms of expression. Its characteristics were vigour and animation, copiousness, clearness, above all, sound English, now a rare excellence. The vigour and life were unabating; perhaps in that conscious strength which cost no exertion he did not always gauge and measure the force of his own words. Those who studied the progress of his writing might perhaps see that the full stream, though it never stagnated, might at first overflow its banks; in later days it ran with a more direct undivided torrent. His copiousness had nothing tumid, diffuse, Asiatic; no ornament for the sake of ornament. As to its clearness, one may read a sentence of Macaulay twice, to judge of its full force, never to comprehend its meaning. His English was pure, both in idiom and in words, pure to fastidiousness; not that he discarded, or did not make free use of the plainest and most homely terms (he had a sovereign contempt for what is called the dignity of history, which would keep itself above the vulgar tongue), but every word must be genuine English, nothing that approached real vulgarity; nothing that had not the stamp of popular use, or the

authority of sound English writers, nothing unfamiliar to the common ear.

The Essays, however, were but preparatory, subsidiary to the great history, which was the final aim, and the palmary ambition of Macaulay. On the function, on the proper rank, on the real province and use of history, he had meditated long and profoundly. His ideal of the perfect historian, such as he aspired to be, may be found in an Essay, somewhat too excursive, in the "Edinburgh Review," republished in the recent volumes. A perfect history, according to Macaulay, would combine the unity and order of the great classical historians, with the diversity and immense range of modern affairs. This was but one condition; the history would not be content with recording the wars and treaties, the revolutions and great constitutional changes, the lives of kings, statesmen, generals; it would embrace the manners, usages, social habits, letters, arts, the whole life of the nation. It would cease to be haughtily aristocratic; it would show the progress of the people in all its ranks and orders. There can be no doubt that, as to the actual life of certain periods, Shakespeare and Scott are more true and trustworthy historians than Hume or even Clarendon. Why should not romance surrender up the province which it had usurped? Why should not all this, which is after all the instructive, not to say amusing part of the annals of mankind, be set in a framework of historic truth, instead of a framework of fiction? If we would really know our ancestors, if we would really know mankind, and look to history for this knowledge, how can history, secluding itself in a kind of stately majesty, affect to disdain this most important

part of her office? Nothing can be more clumsy than the devices to which the historian sometimes has recourse. It may be excusable in historic dissertations (the form which Hallam's works assumed) to have the book half text, half notes,—broken, fragmentary, without continuity. Hume and Robertson took refuge in appendices, in which they sum up, with unsatisfactory brevity, what they wanted skill to inweave into their narrative. Henry's history may be read as containing what Hume left out. If there is in notes much beyond citation of authorities, perhaps comparison of conflicting authorities (we may pardon in Gibbon something more), this can only show that the historian has an unworthy conception of his high art, or that he wants the real power and skill of an historian. But to this lofty view of the historian's function who is equal? It required all Macaulay's indefatigable research. For the historian, the true historian, must not confine himself to the chronicles and annals, the public records, the state papers, the political correspondence of statesmen and ambassadors; he must search into, he must make himself familiar with the lowest, the most ephemeral, the most contemptible of the writings of the day. There is no trash which he must not digest; nothing so dull and wearisome that he must not wade through. Nor are books all; much is to be learned from observation; and Macaulay delighted in rambling over England, to visit the scenes of historic events, the residences of remarkable men: the siege of Derry was described from Derry and its neighbourhood; the exquisitely true and vivid epithets with which he paints the old Italian towns in his Roman ballads owe their life and reality to

his travels in Italy. Finally, to order, dispose, work into a flowing and uninterrupted narrative, the whole of this matter demanded nothing less than his prodigious memory, ever at the command of his imagination; to arrange it without confusion, to distribute it according to the laws of historic perspective, to make it, in short, a history, as difficult to lay down as the most stirring and engrossing romance.

Alas! that all this matchless power and skill should end in a torso, — yet a torso if, as we fairly may, we take the Revolution and the reign of William III. as a whole, nearly complete in its stature, and in all its limbs! It is deeply to be lamented that Macaulay allowed himself to be called off by generous and grateful friendship to write the lives in the Encyclopædia. All of these, even that of Pitt (as far as it goes, a perfect biography), we would willingly sacrifice if we could fill up the few chasms in his history. And what would we not give for his Queen Anne? William III., to whom he first did justice, and not more than justice, when looked upon from a European, not from an English point of view, was a labour of love: but what would have been the more congenial age of Anne, in which he knew every one, the Queen and her Court, Harley, St. John, Swift, Pope, Arbuthnot, as if he had lived with them on the most intimate terms? That in the main Macaulay possessed the still higher qualities of an historian, truth and impartiality, we hesitate not to avow our opinion; of this posterity will judge, we quietly and confidently await its award. He spoke out too freely, too strongly, not to encounter some prejudices, some no doubt very honest political or religious feelings. He

did not, perhaps, always nicely measure the strength of his own language; and he so abhorred meanness and dishonesty, that they appeared doubly mean and dishonest in men of great fame and high pretensions. As to Marlborough, we are content to place Mr. Hallam's even more condemnatory verdict by the side of Macaulay's; and Macaulay had not reached the brighter part of Marlborough's career; in the last volume that great man is already shaking off the slough of his baser life. Penn's double and conflicting character (assuredly no rare occurrence in history) must be viewed on all sides. In Pennsylvania, the wise, Christian legislator, worthy of all praise, he was, in England, a vain busy man, proud of his influence with the king, who found it his interest to flatter him, and unable to keep himself out of the miserable intrigues of that miserable court.

A few sentences on Macaulay's conversational powers, on his private life still fewer. There is a common impression that in society he was engrossing and overpowering. Every one has heard the witty saying of his old friend (no two men could appreciate each other more highly or more justly) about "flashes of silence." But in the quiet intercourse with the single friend, no great talker was more free, easy and genial, than Macaulay. There was the most equable interchange of thought; he listened with as much courtesy, as he spoke with gentle and pleasant persuasiveness. In a larger circle, such as he delighted to meet and assemble around him to the close of his life, a few chosen intimates, some accomplished ladies, foreigners of the highest distinction, who were eager to make his acquaintance, his manners were frank and open. In con-

versation in such a circle, a commanding voice, high animal spirits, unrivalled quickness of apprehension, a flow of language as rapid as inexhaustible, gave him perhaps a larger share, but a share which few were not delighted to yield up to him. His thoughts were like lightning, and clothed themselves at once in words. While other men were thinking what they should say, and how they should say it, Macaulay had said it all, and a great deal more. And the stores which his memory had at instantaneous command! A wide range of Greek and Latin history and literature, English, French, Italian, Spanish; of German he had not so full a stock, but he knew the best works of the best authors; Dutch he learned for the purpose of his History. With these came anecdote, touches of character, drollery, fun, excellent stories excellently told. The hearer often longed for Macaulay's memory to carry off what he heard in a single morning, in an after-dinner colloquy, or in a few hours in a country house.

Lord Macaulay was never married; his strong domestic affections were chiefly centred in his sister, happily married to his friend Sir Charles Trevelyan, and her family. Her children were to him as his own, and cherished with almost parental tenderness. As a friend, he was singularly stedfast; he was impatient of anything disparaging of one for whom he entertained sincere esteem. In the war of political life, he made, we believe, no lasting enemy; he secured the unswerving attachment of his political friends, to whom he had been unswervingly true. No act inconsistent with the highest honour and integrity was ever whispered against him. In all his writings, however his opinions, so

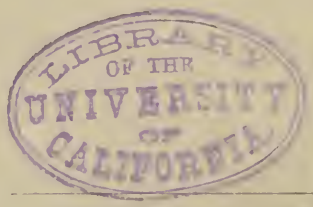
strongly uttered, may have given offence to men of different sentiments, no sentence has been impeached as jarring against the loftiest principles of honour, justice, pure morality, rational religion.

In early life he was robust and active; and though his friends at a later period could not but perceive the progress of some mysterious malady (he was long harassed by a distressing cough), yet he rallied so frequently, and seemed to have so much buoyancy of constitution, that they hoped he might have life to achieve his great work. He himself felt inward monitions; his ambition receded from the hope of reaching the close of the first Brunswicks; before his last illness he had reduced his plan to the reign of Queen Anne.

His end, though not without warning to those who watched him with friendship and affection, was sudden and singularly quiet; on December 28, 1859, he fell asleep and woke not again.

He was buried, January 9, 1860, in Westminster Abbey, in Poets' Corner, his favourite haunt; and he was known to have expressed a modest hope that he might be thought worthy to repose there with the illustrious dead. He lies at the foot of Addison's statue, near to Johnson, and among many other of our most famous statesmen and men of letters.

H. H. M.



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